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Next 3 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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The Miami Herald

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6-A

Wednesday, February 11, 1970

EDITORIALS

Cuban Airlift Simply U.S. Aid To Castro

THE FREEDOM Airlift from Cuba guarantees that the cost of the Cuban refugee welfare program will keep rising.

A five-year average of the cost is \$59 million per year, but the cost this fiscal year will be \$87 million and by next fiscal year is expected to rise to \$122 million.

The U.S. government thus assists Fidel Castro by flying over and picking up, at no cost to him, some 4,000 Cubans per month whose lives are uncomfortable there.

For many, this discomfort is attribut-

able to economic conditions, due both to the ineptness of the Cuban government and to the U.S. policy of trying to isolate the island.

The political factors appear to be less critical, for most of those politically opposed to Castro left in the early years. They did not need 11 years to make up their minds.

Some 10 per cent of the 500,000 Cubans in this country are on welfare. Most of them are the elderly, and more and more of those coming in now are elderly.

Just before the airlift started in 1965, the number of refugees on welfare had dwindled sharply enough that serious consideration was being given to merging the program into the regular welfare system.

Since the airlift, the numbers and costs have skyrocketed. In addition to the elderly, and the standard assistance offered in transporting them here and caring for them as they get settled, the number of refugee children in the schools keeps rising and therefore so does the need for federal "impact" aid to serve them.

As we have said before, it is a question of priorities. The airlift has outlived its original purpose. It is no longer an emergency relief measure, but an open-ended recruiting.

On one hand, U.S. policy tries to isolate Cuba and make the lives of its people uncomfortable, and on the other hand the U.S. flies over and brings out 4,000 of the discontented each month.

Does this make sense? We think not, and hope that the Senate subcommittee on Refugees will weigh these factors in making its recommendations.

Better Things For Living...

A CHEMIST is unlikely source of insight into the malaise afflicting a number of thoughtful Americans these days. Yet that is the core of testimony to a congressional subcommittee by Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, discoverer of plutonium and now chairman of the Atomic Energy Committee.

"We have always experienced times when we have been dissatisfied, unhappy with ourselves and our conditions, and lamented them profoundly before we took new steps to change them."

He added that events and writings of recent years seem to hint that "we may already be well into such an age" of soul-searching.

If Dr. Seaborg is right, today's ferment will yield a new and better set of values, plus a rechanneling of activity in terms of the quality of our lives, as he puts it.

Sun., Feb. 8, 1970 THE MIAMI HERALD 5-M

Cuban Welfare:

By TOM LITTLEWOOD

Miami Herald-Chicago Sun-Times Wire

WASHINGTON — One welfare system that is growing more expensive and no one is very alarmed about is associated with the Cuban refugee program.

Since 1965, 360,000 Cubans who have relatives in the United States have been airlifted to Miami. Flights chartered by the American government leave the Varadero Beach airport twice a day five days a week.

Roughly two out of three of the newcomers are eventually relocated elsewhere in this country.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare pays for their transportation, medical examinations and a one-time "transitional grant" of \$100 per family.

IN DADE COUNTY, Fla., moreover, the government contributes about \$14 million annual reimbursement for the impact to the school system of the one out of three

who remain in Miami's Cuban colony.

If the immigrant is unable to support himself — and about 15 per cent are continuing dependency cases — HEW assumes the full cost of their public assistance and medical care payments.

Over five years, the annual cost of the program has aver-

aged \$59 million. In the current fiscal year the outlay will be \$87,376,000.

The approved budget for the next fiscal year, during which 48,000 additional refugees are expected, calls for a substantial increase to \$122 million. That is almost twice the rate of expenditures during the first five years.

There are two reasons for the increase cited by HEW:

1. MORE OF the newcomers are elderly than during the early period when many of Cuba's most talented and skilled brainpower sought better opportunities in this country.

2. THE CONCEPT of special school "impact" aid has been expanded by the Nixon Administration to cover not merely the port of entry in Miami but two industrial communities in northern New Jersey.

HEW's budget includes Cuba impact funds for the schools in Union City and West New York, N.J., both in the New York City metropolitan area.

Rep. Dominick V. Daniels of Jersey City, who is chairman of the select subcommittee on education in the House, proposed earlier that the general program of federal impact aid be changed to include the refugee impact, unless HEW did something about the two localities in his district.

About 10,000 refugees have settled in the two New Jersey cities, a sizable concentration, though not as many as the 16,000 in the larger city of Chicago.

WHEN NIXON vetoed the appropriation for health and education recently, he singled out the regular federal impact program as an example of wasteful utilization of scarce federal funds.

An official in the section of HEW's social and rehabilitation service devoted to the Cuban program agreed that most of the refugees now contribute to the economies of their communities and live usually in housing that is taxed for school purposes.

Once special treatment is provided for a cause as a matter of national policy, the question of where to draw the line, and when the special treatment should end, becomes more ticklish.

The rising cost of the program and the school impact controversy are two aspects that concern the Senate subcommittee on refugees and its chairman, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D., Mass.).

THE AUTHORIZING law enacted in 1962 is open-ended. The waiting lists for a seat on the airplane now contains about 175,000 names. There has never been any hesitation on the part of U.S. public officials about wel-

LATIN AFFAIRS

It Will Cost \$122 Million Next Year, And Senate Unit Is Studying Program

Sun., Feb. 8, 1970

THE MIAMI HERALD

3-M

coming into the United States any Cubans who are allowed to leave Fidel Castro's Communist regimes.

One of the lists has been closed by Castro. But there is a separate category for U.S. citizens who may "claim" a relative in Cuba. Departing refugees are limited by the Cuban government to one suitcase of possessions, and they may bring no money.

Unless their relatives are able to help them, they are dependent upon the government until they obtain a job and become self-supporting.

Most of the Cuban refugees have chosen to change their status to that of permanent resident after the required two-year wait, the first step toward eventual American citizenship.

WHEN THE CHANGE of status occurs, and 96,000 Cubans elected to do so in fiscal 1968, they are counted

against the Western Hemisphere limit in the immigration law.

The late Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R., Ill.) insisted upon that proviso in the 1965 immigration law revision. The distribution of a big chunk of the quota to the airlifted Cubans, off the top, has sharply reduced immigration from Mexico, Jamaica and other nations in this hemisphere.

Kennedy and Rep. Michael A. Feighan (D., Ohio), chairman of the House immigration subcommittee, agree that the Cuban airlift should not be under the annual ceiling of 160,000 from Latin America and Canada.

This quota preference is only one of the ways in which U.S. policy makes a distinction between those who are assumed to be fleeing oppression and others — such as Mexican-Americans — who may create dependency problems.



Cuban Refugees Arriving in Miami

... plane makes trip twice daily